

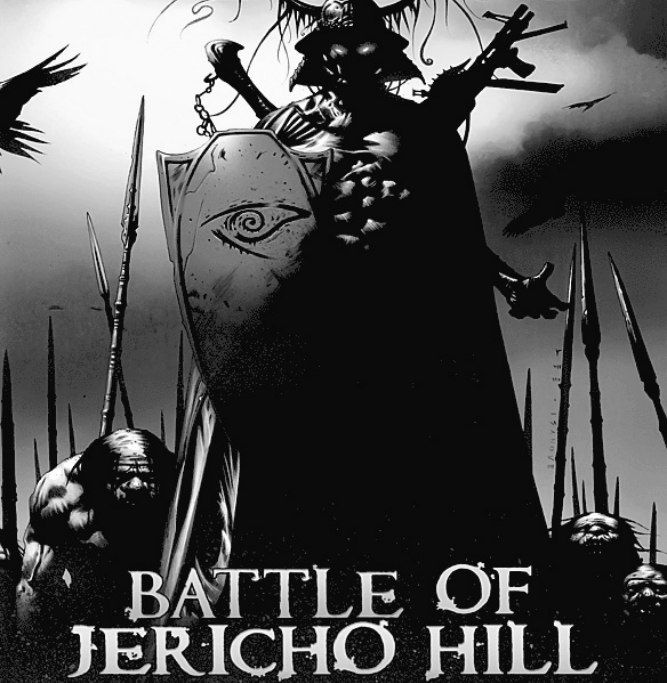
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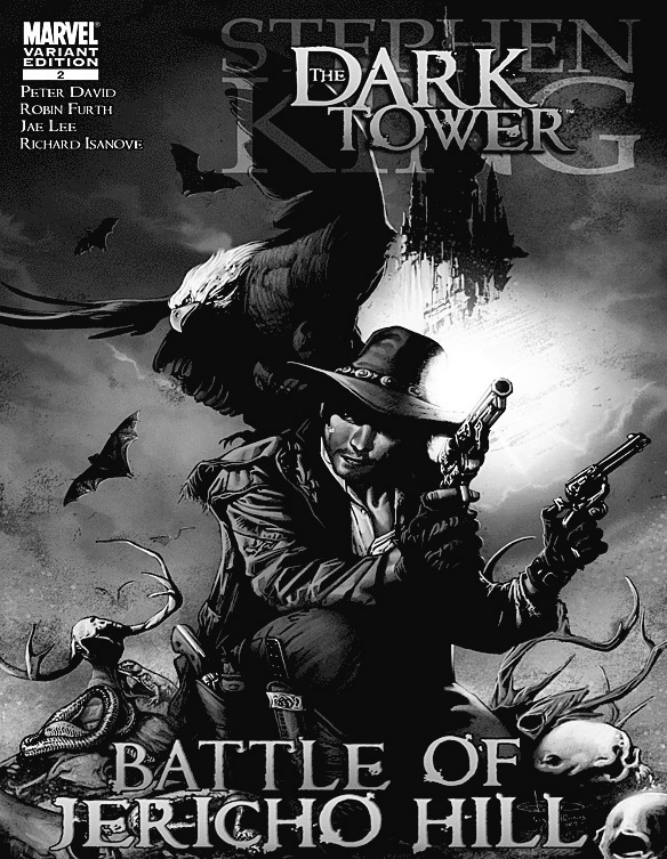


BATTLE OF JERICHO HILL

MARVEL
VARIANT
EDITION
2

PETER DAVID
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THE DARK TOWER



BATTLE OF JERICHO HILL

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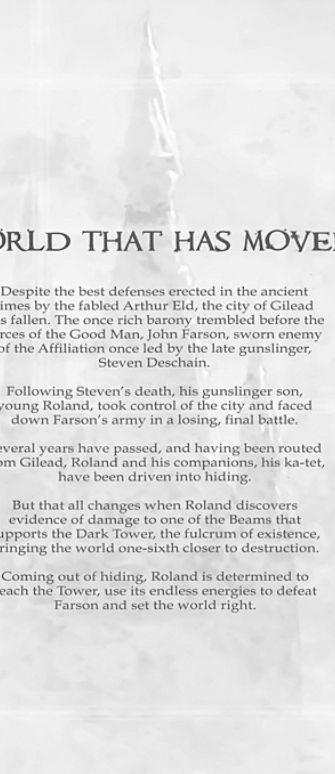
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IN A WORLD THAT HAS MOVED ON...

Despite the best defenses erected in the ancient times by the fabled Arthur Eld, the city of Gilead has fallen. The once rich barony trembled before the forces of the Good Man, John Farson, sworn enemy of the Affiliation once led by the late gunslinger, Steven Deschain.

Following Steven's death, his gunslinger son, young Roland, took control of the city and faced down Farson's army in a losing, final battle.

Several years have passed, and having been routed from Gilead, Roland and his companions, his ka-tet, have been driven into hiding.

But that all changes when Roland discovers evidence of damage to one of the Beams that supports the Dark Tower, the fulcrum of existence, bringing the world one-sixth closer to destruction.

Coming out of hiding, Roland is determined to reach the Tower, use its endless energies to defeat Farson and set the world right.



People what has kids, they tell ya that time just flies right past in an eyeblink. "Where'd the time go?" That's what they ask as a mewling infant turns into, say, a sprinting nine-year-old overnight.

Now Roland...the spawn of his loins ain't a child, but a quest for a place called the Dark Tower.



He remembers the day he learned that the Crimson King was the reason the First Beam broke. That day came near to breaking him.



Every day did, truth t'tell. Every day of those nine long years.





*And that child don't turn into nothing overnight. Instead it hangs around his neck, never growing, never changing. It's just **there**, part of the weight he carries...*

*...for nine damned years. Nine years that don't fly, but **crawl**...*



...and Roland feels every minute of every hour of every day.

He remembers palavering with the ghosts of Stone Circle druids, hoping that the spirits could guide the way.



*He remembers **every** single time he passed through yet another example of John Farson's brutality, feeling as if they were left there purely to taunt him with evidence of the Good Man's growing power.*



When people get lost, they
tend to wander in a circle. So
it is with Roland and his ka-tet.
For nine years later, they find
themselves back where they
started...

...upon the ruins
of Gilead...

...and it is there that
he now speaks to his
followers:

We
know that
reality's coming
undone.

That under the
"tender" guidance of
the Crimson King, psychics
are gathered in prisons,
forced to use their minds
to erode the Beams
supporting the Dark
Tower.

Even broken
clocks, which are
plentiful, no longer
tell the right time twice
a day, because day comes
seemingly **whenever**, and
night goes on seemingly
forever.

More muties are
being spat out into
plague-ravaged lands
where finding our way is
impossible because the
sun rises and sets where
it will, and compass
needles spin without
slowing.





Mid-World
is dying, my
friends.

That is what
we know. That...
and one more
thing:

We have to find
a way to stop it,
because there is
simply no one else
to do it.

If we fail,
the world
around us
will fail.

We will *not*
let that happen.
And the first step
in preventing
it--

"...is by taking
the fight directly
to Farson.

"Even now, his technicians
are taking devastating weaponry
that had once been considered
irreparable and are making
them functional.

"This includes some
manner of technology
that I have, frankly,
never heard of. It's
called..."

Lasers,
General Grissom,
are now online and
ready to be
tested.







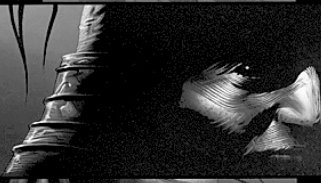
I have heard
that song played
before, Head Technician
Wurtz...by three of your
predecessors,
in fact.

It may have
come to your
attention that I
was not *blessed*--or
rather "*inflicted*" might
be the *better* word--
with a forgiving
nature.

So consider
your answer
carefully when
I ask...are you
sure?

Yes,
General.

Then let
us bring in
the test
subject.



You heard
the General!
Bring in the test
subject!

Greetings, citizen!
In being permitted to
die so that this weapon
may be tested, you are
about to have a great
honor bestowed
upon you.

If it's so great,
I will *gladly* step
aside so that you
can bestow it upon
yourself.

In fact, there
are *several* things
I could suggest you
do to yourself right
now.

General
Grierson, it appears
we have a wit in our
presence.

Hardly. I am
simply one who has
no love for a world
that would allow you
and your ilk to
exist.

Then we shall
relieve you of
your burden.
Power up!

The laser cannon builds up energy, and at first it sounds like a dying cat. But the dying cat becomes a roaring lion, and if this poor bastard has any illusions that he's gonna survive, they're dashed pretty quick.

You and me, we might scream for mercy that won't come, but not this nameless guy, no. Instead, as the air starts to crackle around him, he reaches deep within himself and then calls out--



Let Farson know, even as I burn here for mere seconds...

...that the gunslingers will send him to the hell he so richly deserves, where he will burn for all eternity! Mid-World will never miss me, but all will celebrate when he is--





Gone! By
the man Jesus,
Roland--

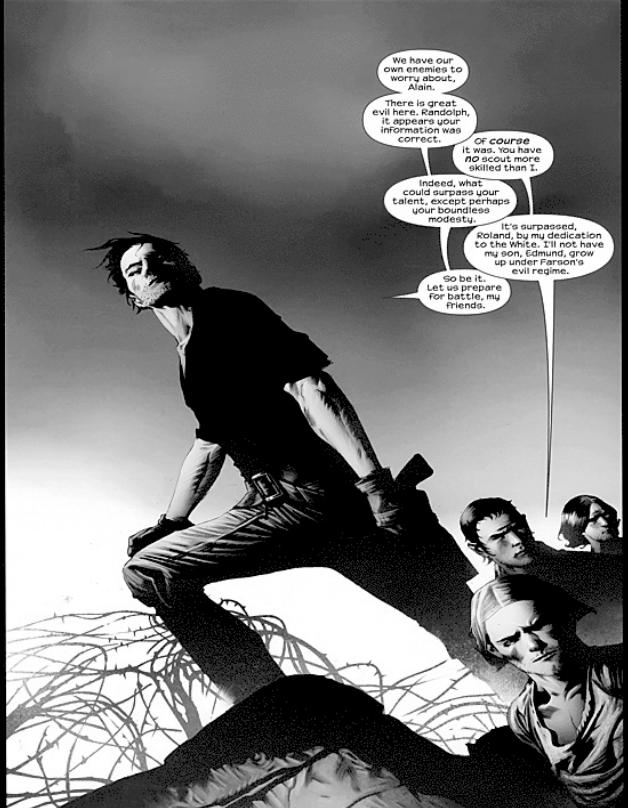
--he's gone
in a burst
of...

...of light!
The poor man
was annihilated by...
by concentrated
light!

As if they
harnessed
the power of
a sun!

These were the
weapons that were
left behind? Weapons
that those who wielded
them could not survive
to keep using?

My God...what
sort of weapons
did they face in
opposition, if
these could not
prevail?



We have our
own enemies to
worry about,
Alain.

There is great
evil here. Randolph,
it appears your
information was
correct.

Of course
it was. You have
no scout more
skilled than I.

Indeed, what
could surpass your
talent, except perhaps
your boundless
modesty.

It's surpassed,
Roland, by my dedication
to the White. I'll not have
my son, Edmund, grow
up under Farson's
evil regime.

So be it.
Let us prepare
for battle, my
friends.



I am truly
impressed, Head
Technician
Wurtz.

I tremble in
the greatness of
your praise, General.
And I have *other*
miracles to show
you as well.



This, for
example, has
nearly as much fire-
power as the laser,
but is supremely
transportable.

Enemy
soldiers will be
dead before they
even see it
comin--

BLAAAM



Sniper
fire!

The General immediately opens fire on where he thinks the shots are coming from. Unfortunately for him...

...there's something called a "learning curve" when it comes to operating new weapons, or anything new.

Shooting a man standing unmoving two feet away is one thing. Snipers in the distance is another thing entirely. Long and short of it is...

...the General winds up managing to kill a brace of his own men while hitting exactly none of Roland's.



I don't understand, Roland. The charges are in place. Why not just blow the place up and be done with it? Some of the soldiers are escaping--

Good.





"Good? Roland...
they're the enemy!"

"Yes. And to defeat
superior forces in body,
you must first defeat
them in their own minds.
We *want* some to
survive..."



"...so that they can
tell tales of this
massacre to
others."

"They will plant the
seeds of fear for us
with Farson's army...
and hope in the hearts
of everyone else."

"Still...enough have
managed to vacate
the area for our
purposes. Annihilate
the rest of it before
Grissom gets his range."

And so it
was done.

People from miles away
heard the explosion, or
felt it, or smelled the
aroma of billowing smoke
and charred flesh.

People from generations
away still talk about the
day that Mid-World
exploded.

Or at least
that's what it
must've seemed
like to 'em.





The hidden charges, set by Roland's stealthiest operatives, were blown sky-high.

And Roland and his ka-tet put it to their backs, secure in the knowledge that nothing could survive that blast.



Sad to say, though...

...Roland underestimated just how sturdy the tank was that housed the laser, and likewise just how secure inside of it was General Grissom.



I'll cut those Affiliation cretins to pieces by inches for this!





Randolph?

Randolph, it's been almost three weeks since you and Roland and the others blew up Grissom's encampment.

And your point, my dear?

My point is that you keep watch as if you expect to see his troops pour over the horizon any *moment*.

Are you suggesting I relax my vigilance?

I am *suggesting*, my dear...



...that you stop acting as if the safety of the entire Alliance encampment rests solely on your shoulders...

...and join your son and me for berry picking.

I am a warrior, Chloe, and I can best serve the needs of--



Randolph, I love you dearly...

...but I can recite this speech in my *sleep*.

Tell you what: Mayhap I'll join you and Edmund anon, should...

Should your eyes tire and your shoulders become stooped with all the responsibility you take upon yourself? I await that moment eagerly.



Be careful, and stick only to the areas that we know are safe.

Always.

*And she does. Chloe is
as good as her word.*

*Although she and Edmund move
in their excursion to the further
regions of the Affiliation's
encampment...*

*...it's still well within
the area of the secured
perimeter.*



*Funny thing, though, which
Edmund learns as he notices
something spying on him from
deep within some brush...*



*The whole thing
about what you
know to be safe
is...*







...it's the things
you *don't* know
that'll kill ya.

TO BE
CONTINUED

THE MACHINES OF MID-WORLD



As any time-traveler will tell you, the Mid-World that we've come to know and love is predominantly a rural, preindustrial society. The In-World hub of Gilead is in equal parts a medieval court, ruled by the aristocratic descendants of Arthur



Eld and his gunslinger-knights, and a version of the Wild West, albeit one haunted by mutants and monsters as well as six-gun-toting harriers. It is a land without factories or production lines, and one where knowledge of magic is more important than an understanding of the technological sciences so central to our own where and when. Yet despite the inability of Mid-Worlders to build modern machinery, the wastelands of Mid-World are littered with tanks, flamethrowers, lasers, and other high-tech killing machines. And unfortunately for Roland and his friends, it is with these terrible futuristic weapons that John Farson's forces are arming themselves.

But how is it possible that these tanks and atomic missiles, grenades and mines, can exist in a land where the citizens have neither the knowledge nor the technical skill to create them? And how is it that an agrarian world could well destroy itself with weapons that should not even exist within it? The answer lies, as such answers so often do, in Mid-World's ancient past.

Long, long ago—a thousand years before Arthur Eld rose to power—Mid-World was ruled by a race known as the Old Ones.

These Old Ones, or Old People, had a god-like knowledge of technology. They built grand, imposing cities controlled by enormous centralized computers, trains that could think and speak, and robots so intelligent and well-built that they outlasted their makers by millennia. Expert time-travelers and multi-dimensional explorers, the Old People created doorways that led to other eras and alternative, parallel realities. But despite their brilliance, what the Old People did best was create terrible, annihilating weapons.

Like their ancestors, the Druids, who built stone circles in which to practice human sacrifice, the Old People worshipped death. And in the end, their death-drive was what destroyed them. No matter what grand plans they may have had for uniting the interpenetrating universes with their magical/mechanical doorways, or for creating a better life for Mid-World's citizens with their computerized home appliances and domestic robots, over time more and more of their technological wizardry was focused on destroying one another.

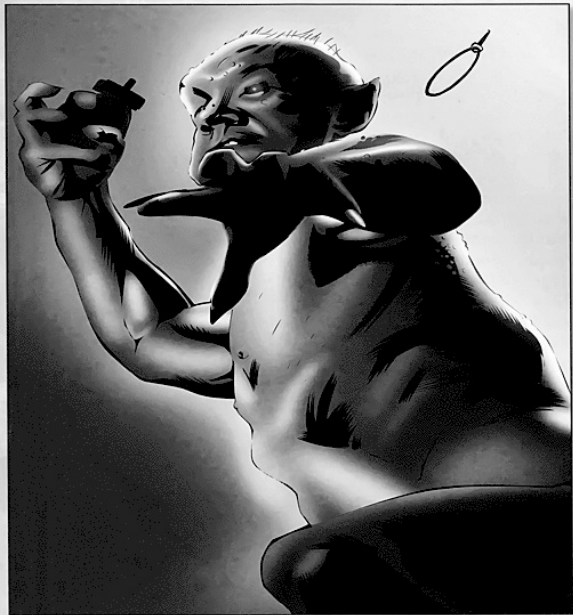
The Old People created the sparklights which still illuminate Gilead's Great Hall, and the elec-



tric icemakers which In-World's children adore. They created the abandoned train lines which tunnel through Mid-World's mountains, and the Asimov Robots that still operate in some outlying areas of Mid-World's Borderlands. But the Old People also created the Red Death, a disease which killed the people of Fedic, and the toxic gasses which asphyxiated the citizens of Lud, once the jewel of the Imperium.

If you travel through Mid-World, you can still find the Old People's Dogans, or military control centers, in which they stored their arms. Among their old-fashioned weapons were armored vehicles fitted with long-range, exploding

shells, high-powered machine guns, cluster bombs, and land-mines. Then there were the dragon-tanks, which sucked people into their armored maws and then shot them out as charred remains. There were the banshee bombs, which emitted a scream-



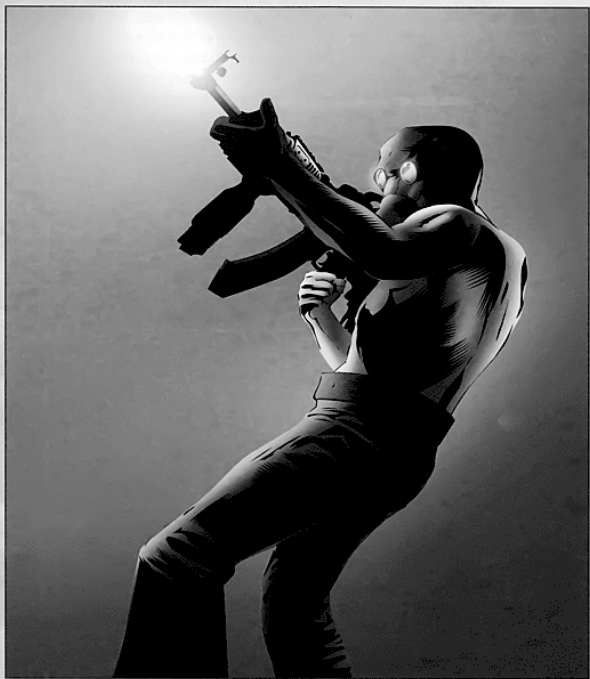
ing frequency so powerful that all flesh within range exploded. Worse still were the basilisk rays, which turned their targets to stone. For hand-to-hand combat they had light-sticks, which hurled fire, and laser guns, which used a stream of photons to reduce men to ash. Worse still were the stealthies, which, once programmed and thrown, put forth whirling razor-blades that stripped their targets of skin—top to toe—in five seconds. But perhaps most dehumanizing of all were the mutating poisons with which the Old People contaminated the air, soil, and drinking water of their enemies—toxins which did not just kill, but robbed their victims of their very humanity.

There are many people in Mid-World who maintain that the true descendants of the Great Old Ones are not the human citizens of In-World or Out-World but the mutants who live beneath the decrepit cities, or in the contaminated factories, or in the tainted, underground mines. According to folklore, these monsters are the great-great-grandchildren of the powerful elite who took shelter in Mid-World's bunkers, or who hid in the radon mines, hoping to outlive the rest of the citizens who were left out in the poisonous air to die. But most Mid-World citizens

believe this story to be apocryphal. They deny that the Old People could have come to such an ugly, cannibalistic end, but even those who most vehemently deny such stories have to admit that there is some metaphorical relationship between these two races. The Old People may not have eaten human flesh and sucked human bones for their marrow, but like the mutants who came after them, they had no regard for human life.

There is a famous saying in Mid-World: The ways of the Old People were the ways of Death. And the Old People's ways are just what Roland and his friends are fighting against. John Farson and his followers have taken up the ancient arms of Mid-World's ancient people, but symbolically, they have also adopted their bloodlust. Like the Old People, and the druids who came before them, John Farson and his followers worship the Can-Char, Mid-World's ancient gods of destruction. They are determined to bring about Mid-World's second Armageddon, but it is up to Roland and his friends to stop them. 

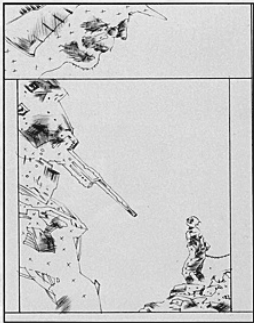
WRITTEN BY:
ROBIN FURTH
ILLUSTRATED BY:
DENNIS CALERO



**DARK TOWER:
THE BATTLE OF
JERICHO HILL
ISSUE #2
SKETCHBOOK**

**A look at the creative team's in-progress work,
including layouts, pencil art and cover concepts.**

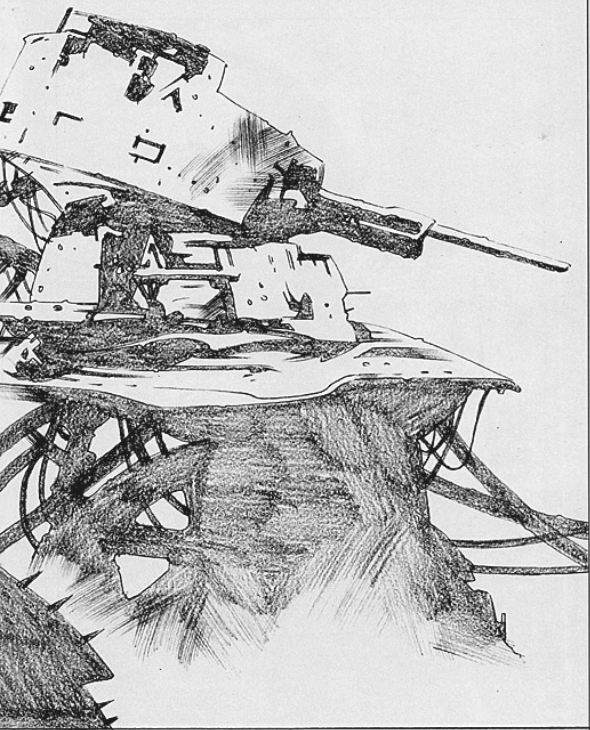
JAE LEE'S ORIGINAL PAGE LAYOUTS. THE FINAL VERSIONS OF THESE PAGES CAN BE SEEN EARLIER IN THIS ISSUE WITH PAINTS BY RICHARD ISANOVE.



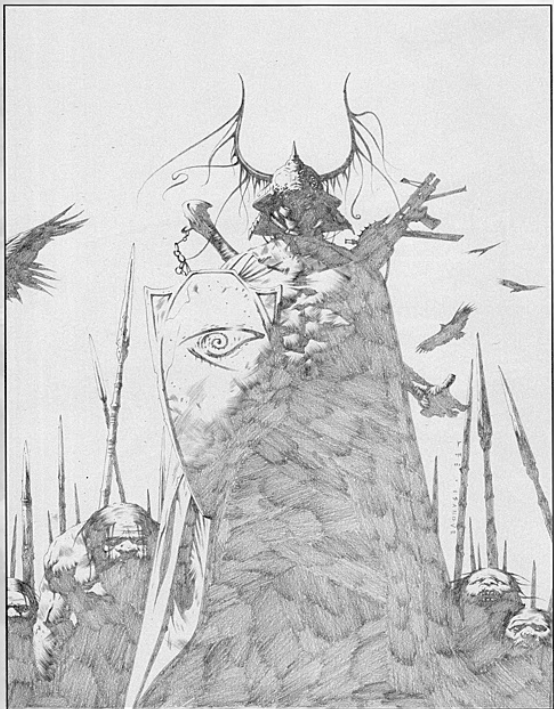


JAE LEE'S ORIGINAL PENCILS FEATURING GENERAL GRISSOM AND HIS
MACHINES OF DESTRUCTION.





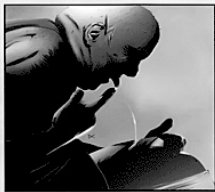
JAE LEE'S ORIGINAL PENCILS FOR THIS ISSUE'S COVER.

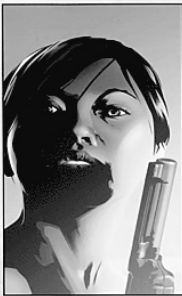
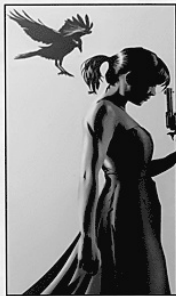


MARVEL ALL-STAR LEONARDO MANCO (*WAR MACHINE, REALM OF KINGS*) MAKES BEAUTIFUL USE OF HIS TRADEMARK REALISM IN THIS VARIANT COVER. THE FINAL COLORS WERE PROVIDED BY HIS *WAR MACHINE* COLLABORATOR, JAY DAVID RAMOS.

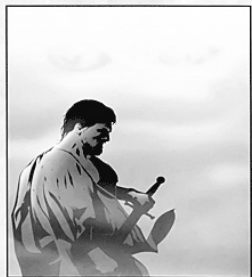


A JACK OF ALL TRADES, ARTIST DENNIS CALERO (*X MEN NOIR: THE MARK OF CAIN*) HAS BECOME AN INTEGRAL MEMBER OF THE DARK TOWER TEAM, VISUALLY INTERPRETING ROBIN FURTH'S MONTHLY INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE DETAILS OF MID-WORLD. THIS GALLERY OF HIS ARTICLE ILLUSTRATIONS IS THE FIRST TIME SOME OF THESE IMAGES HAVE BEEN SEEN IN FULL.



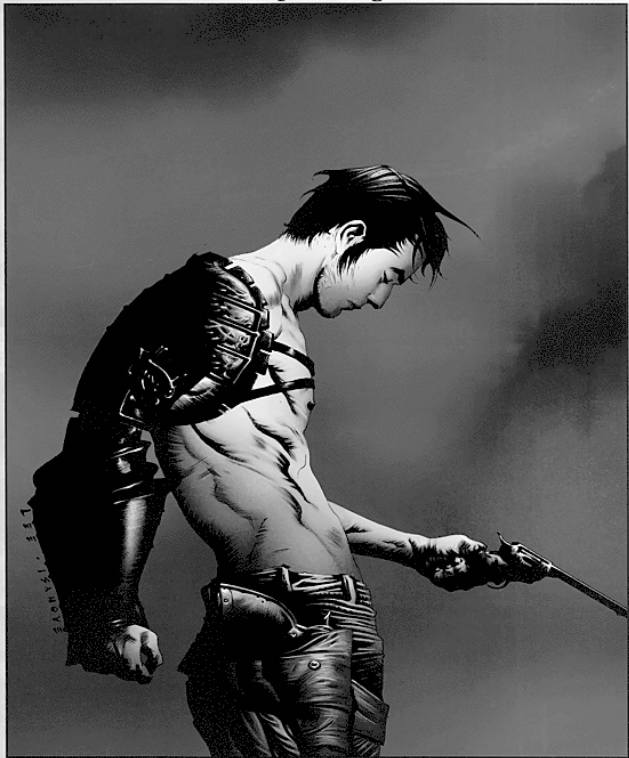


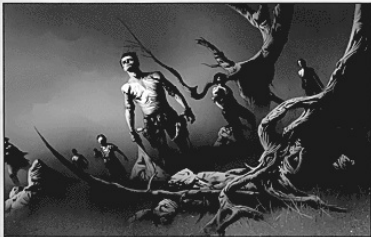






NEXT: Will betrayal from within tear Roland's ka-tet apart for good?





All is not well in Mid-World. Gunslinger Roland Deschain, the young man whose destiny it is to seek and save the Dark Tower, is haunted by horrifying visions from the evil seeing sphere, Maerlyn's Grapefruit. The Crimson King, enemy of all that lives, has long plotted the utter destruction of the Tower, and the undoing of reality itself. Now, with Roland unable to act, his monstrous foe has put his plan into motion...

From the creative team that brought Roland's early adventures to life in *The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger Born*, *The Dark Tower: The Long Road Home*, *The Dark Tower: Treachery* and *Dark Tower: The Fall of Gilead* comes the next chapter of this dark saga of friendship, betrayal and a cosmic quest as conceived by master storyteller Stephen King.

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